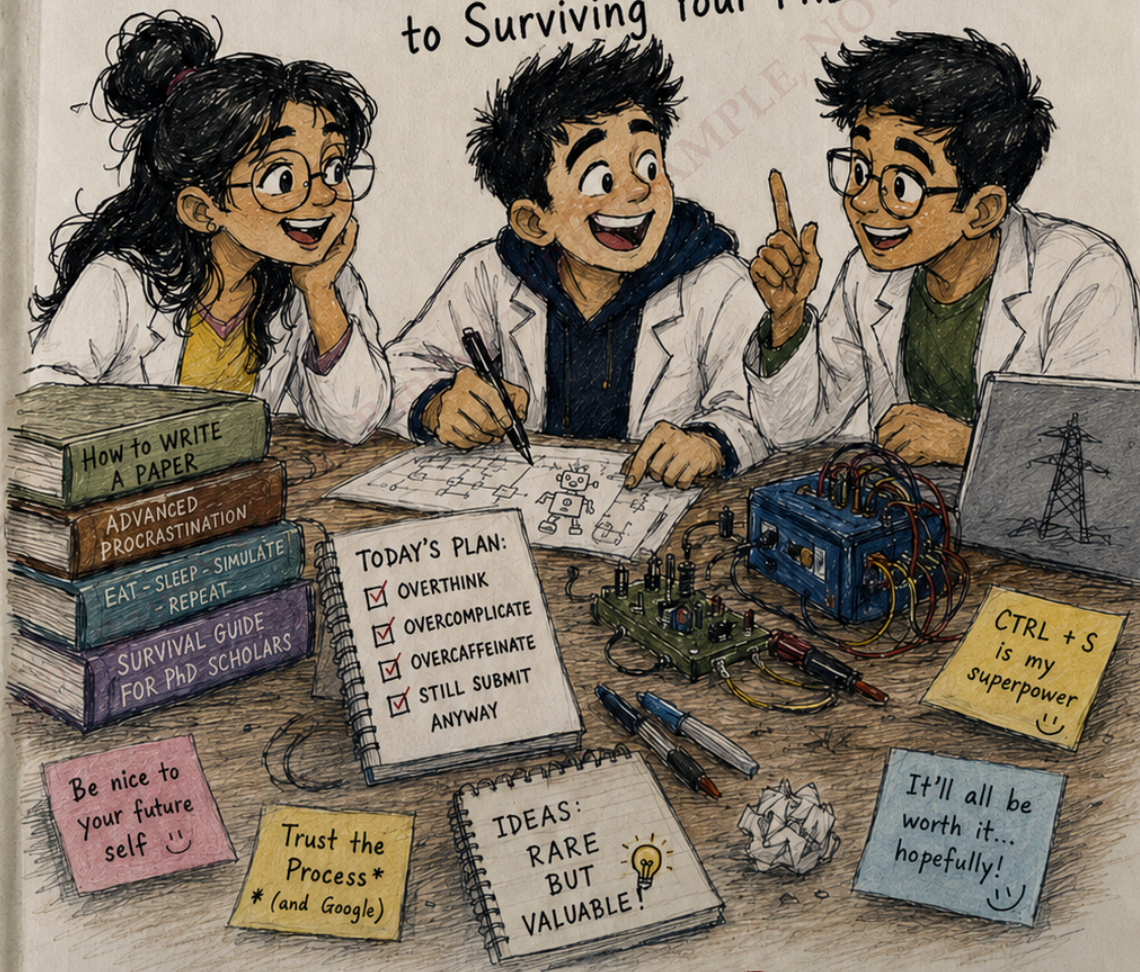
Reviewer 2

Is the Darkness Itself

MAJOR REVISIONS REQUIRED

A Humorous Field Guide to Surviving Your PhD

SAMPLE NOT FOR RESALE



Rajeev Ranjan Pandey

A Humor Book for All PhD Survivors (and Future Victims)

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Reviewer 2

Is the Darkness Itself

MAJOR REVISIONS REQUIRED

A Humorous Field Guide to Surviving Your PhD

FREE SAMPLE – ONE CHAPTER

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For every researcher who has ever refreshed Gmail four times in one minute.

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This book is a work of humour. Bhaskar Pandey is fictional. Reviewer 2, unfortunately, is real, and lives inside every peer review system on Earth. Any resemblance to your actual PhD is not a coincidence, it is a universal constant.

*This is a **free sample edition** containing the front matter and a single chapter from **Reviewer 2 Is the Darkness Itself**. It is intended for free distribution. The full book contains many more chapters covering the entire arc of a PhD, from admission interview to final viva. See the last page of this sample for how to get the complete book.*

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Dedicated to every Reviewer 2 who ever lived.
We know what you are.

And to every researcher still awake at 2 a.m.
writing a rebuttal they will never truly mean.

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How This Book Happened

This book was not planned.

It happened the way most things happen in academia: slowly, then all at once, then very late at night, then submitted five minutes before a deadline nobody remembers setting.

Bhaskar Pandey is fictional. Every event in this book is true. Not true in the sense of "this specific thing occurred on this specific date," but true in the deeper, more troubling sense that if you have ever done research, you have already lived at least six of these chapters, and you will live the rest before you graduate.

This book follows Bhaskar through the full arc of a PhD – submission, rejection, advisors, conferences, funding, the viva, and the slow realization that Reviewer 2 is not a person but a weather system. It is written in short lines on purpose. Academic life does not deserve long, flowing sentences.

If you are currently in a PhD program: I'm sorry, and also, congratulations, and also, please drink some water.

If you have already finished: you know. You know everything. Enjoy watching someone else go through it for once.

If you are considering a PhD: this book is legally required reading before you sign anything.

– Written between two rejected papers and one accepted one.

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What's Inside the Full Book

This sample includes the front matter and one chapter – *The Submission* – so you can get a feel for Bhaskar's world. The complete book follows him through the entire PhD, including:

- The Admission Interview, Registration Day, and the Hall Allotment
- The Guide Assignment and the first advisor meeting that runs ninety minutes over
- The Literature Review, the Plagiarism Checker, and the Comprehensive Viva-Voce
- Conference presentations, networking dinners, and the co-author WhatsApp group
- The Funding Proposal, the Reproducibility Crisis, and the Editor's Own Comments
- University bureaucracy, thesis formatting, impostor syndrome, the Job Market
- The Final Viva – and Reviewer 2's inevitable, unmistakable return

Turn the page for the sample chapter. Details on how to get the full book are on the last page.

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PART I

The PhD Years

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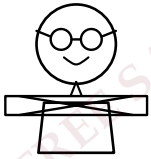
Chapter 1

The Submission

> *In which Bhaskar Pandey experiences six months of peace, condensed into one night.*



Day 1: Submission

Bhaskar Pandey submits a paper to a top journal.

Feels like a genius.

Goes to sleep peacefully for the first time in six months.

This is the last peaceful sleep for a long time.

Day 3

Checks email 47 times.

Nothing.

Checks again.

Still nothing.

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Refreshes Gmail.

Gmail has not changed in the last four minutes.

Bhaskar does not trust Gmail.

Day 45

An email arrives.

"Your manuscript is under review."

Bhaskar celebrates.

Tells his labmate.

Labmate says, "Bhai, yeh toh automatic email hai."

Bhaskar does not tell his labmate that this ruined his entire evening.

Day 127

Another email arrives.

"Decision on your manuscript."

Bhaskar's hands are shaking.

Opens the email slowly.

"We regret to inform you…"

The word "regret" does the damage.

Everything after "regret" is just noise.

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The Reviews

Reviewer 1:

"This is an excellent and well-written paper. The methodology is sound and the results are impressive. I recommend minor revisions."

Bhaskar smiles.

Reviewer 1 is a good human being.

Reviewer 1 understands research.

Bhaskar would like to meet Reviewer 1 and have chai with him.

Reviewer 2:

"I have serious concerns about this manuscript."

Of course you do.

"The authors claim novelty but this work is clearly inspired by Zhang et al. 2019."

Bhaskar checks Zhang et al. 2019.

He has never seen this paper in his life.

He reads it.

It is about something completely different.

Reviewer 2 has not read either paper.

Reviewer 2 continues:

"The results in Figure 3 are suspicious."

Figure 3 is a straight line.

It is supposed to be a straight line.

It is literally proof that the system is stable.

Bhaskar stares at Figure 3 for ten minutes.

Figure 3 stares back.

Neither of them understands what Reviewer 2 wants.

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Reviewer 2 continues again:

"The authors should compare with state-of-the-art methods from 2024."

The paper was submitted in 2024.

Reviewer 2 wants comparison with papers that do not exist yet.

Reviewer 2 exists outside of time.

Final comment from Reviewer 2:

"Overall this paper needs significant work before it can be considered for publication."

Significant work.

Six months of research.

One patent.

Two hundred simulations.

Significant work.

Bhaskar Pandey closes the laptop.

Goes to the mess.

Eats dal-chawal silently.

Comes back.

Opens the laptop.

Starts writing the rebuttal.

The Rebuttal

What Bhaskar writes:

"We thank Reviewer 2 for their valuable and insightful comments. We have carefully considered each point and made significant revisions…"

What Bhaskar means:

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"Reviewer 2 clearly did not read the paper. Figure 3 is supposed to be a straight line. Zhang et al. 2019 is about fish farming. We have no idea what you want from us."

Guide reviews the rebuttal.

Guide: "Bhaskar, this line – 'we respectfully disagree' – change it."

Bhaskar: "To what, sir?"

Guide: "To 'we thank the reviewer for this excellent point."'

Bhaskar: "But sir, they are wrong…"

Guide: "Everyone is wrong. Nobody cares. Just get it published."

Three Months Later

Paper accepted.

Bhaskar checks who Reviewer 2 was.

He will never know.

Reviewer 2 is anonymous.

Reviewer 2 will always be anonymous.

Reviewer 2 is everywhere and nowhere.

Reviewer 2 is the darkness itself.

If you survived a paper rejection and still kept going – you're not alone.

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End of Sample

Bhaskar's PhD – and Reviewer 2 – are just getting started.

Ahead in the full book: the admission interview, the guide who assigns three papers Bhaskar will still be citing four years later, a plagiarism checker that flags his own name, an editor who suddenly develops opinions about the title, and the final viva where correlation and causation briefly, terrifyingly, refuse to be told apart.

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Get the full book on Amazon

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0HCGXQWMC

Enjoyed this sample? A review on Amazon helps more researchers find their way to Bhaskar – and to Reviewer 2.

Reviewer 2 Is the Darkness Itself – Free Sample Edition

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About the Author

Rajeev Ranjan Pandey is a PhD scholar in Electrical Engineering at IIT Kharagpur, a researcher, a builder of things (both hardware and ideas), and a professional deadline negotiator.

He has survived experiments that didn't, papers that got rejected, reviewers who asked the same question in different fonts, and the mysterious creature known as "minor revisions".

When not optimizing equations or code, he optimizes chai intake, writes (questionable) humor, overthinks simple things, and believes that laughter is a better coping mechanism than any algorithm.

This book is his way of saying if you're suffering in your PhD, you're not alone. And if you are enjoying it... you're probably the reviewer. :)

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